

WORLD CLASS HUNTING IN OUR BACKYARD

By Jennie Braatz

Did you know that you live in one of the greatest metropolitan areas for waterfowl hunting in the nation? Yes, Ducks Unlimited has identified the Detroit Metropolitan Area as one of the top ten metropolitan areas for waterfowl hunting in the United States. It is not just the large numbers of waterfowl that pass through the area, but the diversity that makes this a waterfowl haven internationally known for exceptional duck hunting. We live at the intersection of two migratory bird flyways – the Atlantic and the Mississippi. These two flyways bring migratory birds on the fall and spring migrations to our Detroit River and shores of western Lake Erie.

One of the places these birds find refuge is at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Good habitat is what the birds need and we've got it! The refuge offers opportunities for hunting in Humbug Marsh, Calf Island, Sugar Island, Strong Unit, Brancheau Unit, Fix Unit, and Plum Creek Bay Unit. You can find out more about hunting on the refuge by going to our website and following the links to our hunt page http://www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit_river/.

Another exceptional place for waterfowl hunting is Pointe Mouillee State Game Area owned and managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and many other U.S. and Canadian partners are delivering cooperative conservation under the auspices of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. This Refuge extends along 48 miles of lower Detroit River and western Lake Erie, and focuses on conserving, protecting, and restoring habitats for 30 species of waterfowl, 117 kinds of fish, and over 300 species of birds. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service currently owns or cooperatively manages 5,817 acres of unique habitats that include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, wet prairies, shoals and riverfront lands, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources owns 7,897 acres of unique lands and waters, including Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, that are together being cooperatively managed for conservation and outdoor recreation under a U.S. registry of lands. In Canada, the mechanism for cooperative conservation among partners is called the Western Lake Erie Watersheds Priority Natural Area. Through this Canadian effort 3,797 acres of Essex Region Conservation Authority lands and 981 acres of City of Windsor lands have been added to a Canadian registry of lands. When totaled between Canada and U.S., 18,492 acres of land in southwest Ontario and southeast Michigan are now being cooperatively managed and protected for the benefit of wildlife and outdoor recreation in the spirit and intent of a 2001 Conservation Vision and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Managers predict that within the next ten years over 25,000 acres of land and water in southwest Ontario and southeast Michigan will be managed for conservation and outdoor recreation, only enhancing our international reputation for exceptional, close-to-home, outdoor recreation.